

The Importance of Time in Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway

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ABSTRACT

Adeline Virginia Woolf was an English writer and one of the foremost modernist of the twentieth century. One of her famous novels is Mrs. Dalloway. Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, published in 1925, was a bestseller both in Britain and the United States. The action of Mrs. Dalloway takes place during a single day in June 1923 in London, England. This unusual organizational strategy creates a special problem for the novelist: how to craft characters deep enough to be realistic while treating only one day in their lives. Virginia Woolf's novel Mrs. Dalloway has a specific style of writing, the novelist is not using the first person. Mrs. Dalloway is written in the third person omniscient by an anonymous narrator who knows everything about everyone, down to their innermost thoughts. Woolf perfected in this novel is a style of narration that literary critics have called "represented thoughts and speech", capturing the motions of a mind thinking in the past tense, third person. A narrator presents characters thoughts and speech and there is no way to separate the narrator from the character in this novel. Another technique that Virginia Woolf employs to develop the story of the novel is her treatment of time. Apparently, the time of action is only a single day in the lives of Clarissa Dalloway and other characters. In the course of a single day they lived their whole lives, and the readers get to know everything about them. In this novel, the past lives of the characters are not narrated in chronological order, rather they emerge gradually, in fragments, as memories. In this novel, the line between past and present is blurred. The transition from present to past and back into present requires but just a single moment. The book is composed of movements from one character to another, or of movements from the internal thoughts of one character to the internal thoughts of another.